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MILITARY OPERATION INTENSIFIED

Renewed combined military operations in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka have been intensified in recent weeks. Large-scale movement of military personnel in armoured carriers has become a daily feature particularly in the northern district of Jaffna. Houses and whole areas are being surrounded by service personnel in their hundreds during night-time and the carrying out of 'search operations' on a widespread scale has become more and more frequent.

Anyone can expect a 'midnight knock' only to be confronted with a large body of military men, armed to the teeth in menacingly violent mood. Hundreds of indiscriminate arrests have been made during recent weeks and the whereabouts of those taken into custody by the security forces remain a mystery even to the nearest kith and kin.

The army camps which were temporarily closed during the latter part of last year have been reopened with additional men and equipment. The Palaly Army camp, in particular, equipped with modern sophisticatd lethal weaponry gives the picture of a military fortress.

Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne has been appointed Co-ordinating Officer for the Jaffna district. He is the brother of the former Inspector General Police, Mr Ana Seneviratne. The Government Agent of the Jaffna district, Mr Devanesan Nesiah, has been replaced by Mr Camilus Fernando, who previously served in Trincomalee.

'TORTURE CAMP' BLASTED

The Gurunagar Army Camp in the northern Tamil city of Jaffna achieved notoriety as a 'Torture Camp', for it was here the Sri Lankan security forces used to torture, mutilate and even cause death of those detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The government was making preparations to re-open this camp, which was closed temporarily several months ago. On February 24th, at about 5a.m. the Gurunagar Army Camp was reduced to rubble when an incendiary device was exploded.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have claimed responsibility for the blast.

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Tamil TIMES

AN UNFREE PRESS

'The freedom of the press is the essence of liberty and this is the source of all other liberties. If this freedom is suppressed, restrained or controlled, then the foundation for autocracy is laid . . .', said Mr J.R. Jayawardene in his submissions before the Constitutional Court of Sri Lanka in February 1973 challenging the Press Council Bill introduced by the then government of Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike. At the time, Mr Jayawardene was the leader of the Opposition and also the leader of the United National Party.

The 1978 Constitution enacted by Mr Jayawardene's government enshrined freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental constitutional right.

Today, the same Mr Jayawardene, as executive President of Sri Lanka, has not hesitated to lay 'the foundation for autocracy' by the frequent use of emergency powers to suppress, restrain and control press freedom through censorship and closure of opposition and independent newspapers.

Proscription

Newspapers like the ATHTHA and DINAKARA (Sinhala), the SATURDAY REVIEW (English) and SUTHANTHIRAN (Tamil) had been subjected to proscription under emergency regulations.

While the state-controlled and pro-government newspapers have been permitted to a free hand to publish anything they wished, the 'Saturday Review' has been allowed resumption of publication, after a 232-day total ban, only under severe censorship restrictions.

The crime that the 'Saturday Review' committed to merit this discriminatory treatment was the sturdy independence it exercised in exposing the gross violations of human rights and the excesses, abuses and atrocities indulged in by the country's security forces and by those in authority.

The paper was also prepared to make its columns available for news and views which other servile newspapers attempted to suppress or conceal. Not one of the so-called national newspapers protested against the closure of the 'Saturday Review', and now against the imposition of severe restrictions upon it, indicative of the servility and unfree character of the 'national press'.

Distinguished

The early provincial edition of the 'Daily News' of February 11th, 1984, carried an article entitled 'Genius and Greatness wrapped in silks', on Mr Nadesan QC, on his 80th birthday written by Mr George Mason, a Chief Editor of the paper. That Mr Nadesan, one of Sri Lanka's most distinguished and eminent legal luminaries and an indefatigable fighter for civil and human rights, deserved an appreciative article on his 80th birthday, did not seem to endear to those who control the destiny of the 'free press' in the country.

'On orders from above', the article in question was promptly taken off from the later editions of the paper and the resulting space was filled with two photographs which lacked relevance or topicality.

Who gave the 'orders from above' to remove this article and why? So far the lips of President Jayawardene, who is also the Minister in charge of the Lake House group of newspapers which publishes the 'Daily News', have remained tightly sealed. This episode and the discriminatory treatment meted out to the 'Saturday Review', in themselves, are sufficient to explode the myth of a 'free press' in Sri Lanka.

The claim made by the Sri Lankan delegation before the Human Rights Commission of the UN at Geneva recently that 'there is freedom of the Press and opportunity for divergent views' rings hollow in the circumstances.

Just as we commenced these comments with a quotation from the President, we conclude with a quotation from the submissions made by his brother, Mr H.W. Jayawardene, QC, before the Constitutional Court on the Press Council Bill in February 1973:

Universal suffrage

'It is submitted that in a system of government based on universal suffrage, both the issuer and recipient of information express themselves through the ballot. In such a system, there is always a tendency on the part of those in power who wish to maintain their position of power, to control the publication of data and opinion, because it might ultimately affect their tenure. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see those in power hedging themselves in with restrictions on the publication of data which would be the basis for the formation of public opinion.'

It has been said that there is no intention to stifle legitimate criticism. But the whole question is, what is legitimate criticism? And are the targets of criticism the right persons to decide whether it is legitimate or not? If they are the persons entrusted with making this decision, the result will inevitably be to stifle that public discussion, comment and criticism of the conduct and actions of members of the ruling party, which is so essential to prevent misconduct and abuse of power.

— S. Nadesan QC

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SRI LANKA

TUs MAP OUT JOINT CAMPAIGN

Delegates from 625 factories, offices and other workplaces in the Colombo district attended a special conference held at the CMU headquarters on February 23rd.

The conference was convened by a joint committee of 21 leading trade union centres and individual unions.

It was the first in a series of conferences that will be convened in other districts as well, as part of an all-island campaign that the trade unions launched from March 1st.

Trade union leaders such as L.W. Panditha, Bala Tampoe, Alavi Moulana, J.A.K. Perera, Percy Wickremasekera, and N. Sanmugathasan, addressed the conference. A number of delegates from the workshops also spoke.

The conference examined in detail the present condition of the working class. It was emphasised that, while the official cost of living index had topped the 500 mark for the first time ever, wages and salaries remained frozen, while the payments received by workers in the plantations, the FTZ, and many other sectors, remained the lowest in Asia.

Real wages

Real wages had deteriorated markedly. On the one hand, the rupee had been greatly devalued. On the other hand, the prices of essential goods had been pushed up.

The government had recently increased the price of rice, flour and sugar. Sugar is sold at around Rs.12 per kilo. A coconut now costs Rs.6, while coconut oil is Rs.30 a bottle.

Although the price of masoor dhal, the common man's main source of protein, is officially fixed at Rs.23 a kilo, it costs several rupees more in the open market. Meat costs Rs.24 a kilo, and the cheapest kinds of fish cost the same. In this situation, the government has introduced a totally unjustifiable 'rehabilitation tax'.

While taxing the working people to pay for ethnic crimes which they did not commit and were even victims of, the government wastes millions of rupees, as admitted by the Finance Minister himself, in subsidising Air Lanka and other projects. Tens of millions of rupees are lost in corruption and extravagance.

The conference decided to hold the first public rally of the campaign in Colombo on March 22nd.

Resolution

The conference unanimously adopted a resolution which reads:

'This conference resolves that, while workers should struggle for wage increases wherever they can do so, all sections of the working class should be mobilised in a campaign, together with other sections of the masses, to compel the government to reduce the prices of all essential food commodities and transport fares, while, at the same time, demanding the ending of the Emergency, the removal of the proscription of political parties, the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and all other repressive measures enacted by the government under the Emergency or otherwise.

'This conference also endorses the proposal that the trade union organisation represented at this conference should organise a public meeting in Colombo on March 22.

'The demand for the reinstatement of the July 1980 strikers, the restoration of their trade union rights as well as the demand for the restoration of work and wages of the worker victims affected by the July 1983 violence will also be dealt with at this meeting.'

BRITISH LABOUR PARTY CONDEMNS ATROCITIES AND REPRESSION

The National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party has passed the following resolution:

'That this NEC condemns the failure of the Sri Lankan government to protect the Tamil minority against racial attacks. It deplores the atrocities which have been inflicted upon the Tamil population and the participation in these atrocities of the Sri Lankan security forces.

'The NEC calls for an immediate end to the banning of opposition parties and the other repressive measures imposed by the Jayawardene government.

'We will arrange a delegation to the Sri Lankan High Commission at the earliest possible moment to convey the Labour Party's deep concern about the position of the Tamil minority inside Sri Lanka. The Labour Party demands that the British government end all military collaboration with the Sri Lankan security forces.'

SLFP REUNION, A MOVE TO THE RIGHT

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party has readmitted the breakaway group led by Mr Maithripala Senanayake into the party. This group broke away from the SLFP about two years ago. Although Mr Anura Bandaranaike also broke away, along with Mr Senanayake, he soon abandoned the latter and joined his mother, Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike and the SLFP, within a short time.

The present reunion has been hastened by the recent break-up of the SLFP and the formation of the new party, Sri Lanka Peoples Party, under the leadership of Mr T.B. Ilangaratne, a former Vice-President of the SLFP and Mr Vijaya Kumaratunga and his wife Chandrika, the second daughter of Mrs Bandaranaike. The large number of members who had defected to the new party and its growing popularity worried Mrs Bandaranaike to such an extent that she agreed to the re-admission of the Maithri group, a move which she refused even to contemplate until recently.

With the exit of the radical wing, the SLFP with the Maithri group has moved further to the right. The close association of Mr Anura Bandaranaike with President Jayawardene, particularly after his elevation to the post of Leader of the Opposition, is indicative of this move to the right and towards the UNP.

The government's unusual generosity shown to Anura in elevating the post of the Leader of the Opposition to the status of a Cabinet Minister with all the accompanying perks cannot be said to be without political significance.

The government of President Jayawardene would appear to have had decided on a present to Anura on his 35th birthday which fell on February 16th. On that day, the announcement was made elevating his post to Cabinet status, and creating a new department of the Leader of the Opposition.

In addition to the present staff and the Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition, several new posts were created including a Private Secretary on a fixed salary of Rs.18,000; a Co-ordinating Officer on a salary of Rs.18,000 going up to Rs.27,000 and an Administrative Officer on a salary of Rs.14,760 going up to Rs.25,200.

Such expensive gifts, although at the expense of the poor people of Sri Lanka, are not normally to be expected of a government which had hitherto ridden roughshod over the opposition in parliament and outside.

The question that is exercising the minds of politicians and journalists alike in Colombo is, 'Will Anura provide the bridge for the "Grand Alliance" of the UNP and the SLFP?'

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THE QUESTION OF INDIAN INTERVENTION

By S. Sivanayagam

Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi, received an accolade last month, from a most surprising source. President Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan reportedly praised Mrs Gandhi for her 'remarkable restraint' following the crisis in Sri Lanka. He was speaking to the editor of a Sri Lankan newspaper at Islamabad on 9th February.

The Editor (of THE ISLAND), Vijitha Yapa, asked specifically: 'There are fears in some quarters that if another conflagration occurs in Sri Lanka, Mrs Gandhi will send in her troops which would also help her with her elections in the South later this year. Do you have any comments?'

To which President Zia replied: 'It is the Sri Lanka government that must ensure that no situation like that occurs, especially a repetition of the July 83 events.' (Shorn of the language of diplomatic nicety, what it meant in effect was: You were lucky last time. Next time you have trouble, sure she will walk in and none of us can do any damn!) One may not know for certain, yet, whether the US has conceded that Sri Lanka is part of the Indian sphere of influence but it is obvious from President Zia's replies that Pakistan has.

In fact, General Zia's remarks take on sharper interest in the background of last year's events. It is now accepted history (despite stout denials by Colombo at the time) that the Sri Lanka government getting jittery of an imminent Indian invasion had sent urgent appeals for defence assistance at least to four countries — Pakistan, Bangladesh, the US and Britain. It is also known that the response from all those four 'friendly' countries had been unexpectedly lukewarm. While Britain and the US had reacted with caution, Pakistan had reportedly made even a forthright refusal. According to an American news agency man (Stewart Slavin, New Delhi bureau chief of the United Press International), questioning whose credibility itself was irritating to the Ministry of State in Colombo, Pakistan officials had told Colombo that given the then situation in Afghanistan, their country was not in a position to offer any military assistance. Stewart Slain was later expelled from Colombo. But what had irked Colombo more than the refusal itself, was the suspicion that Pakistan had let it be known to New Delhi that Sri Lanka had made such a request! A red-faced Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Hameed was in New Delhi attending the South Asian Foreign Ministers' Conference when India's Minister for External Affairs, Narasimha Rao told an angry Parliament on August 1st that 'there is substance' in the Press reports that Sri Lanka had sought military help from the four countries against a 'foreign power' and that 'foreign power' was India. He said: 'We are looking into all aspects of these reports and are also in touch with several governments including those specified in the press reports to emphasise the nature of Indian concern at the existing situation in Sri Lanka and at the possible future course of developments including any foreign involvement of this kind of the region.'

The Indian doctrine

This was the statement that heralded the enunciation of what came to be known as THE INDIAN DOCTRINE. This doctrine which provoked for the second time an anti-Indian venom in the Sri Lankan Press has been summed up this way: India will not tolerate external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country if the intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-India implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for external military assistance with an anti-Indian bias from any country.

In enunciating the doctrine India had necessarily to demonstrate that her own hands were clean, which she did, and that was the 'remarkable restraint' that General Zia thought fit to applaud. In asserting that she herself had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of any South Asian country, and by holding her hand during the critical final days in July and early August in Sri Lanka, India achieved a diplomatic triumph in getting her regional security doctrine tacitly accepted by all parties concerned.

As to whether this REMAINS accepted at this point of time could be assessed only by understanding the nature and motivation of the heightened political interest by the US government in Sri Lankan affairs within the last month or two, a fact that is certainly becoming too obvious for India's comfort.

Intervening in the debate on Sri Lanka in Lok Sabha on August 5th, last year, Mrs Gandhi said: '. . . we have made it clear in every forum and in every possible way that India does not pose any threat to Sri Lanka; neither do we want to interfere in their internal affairs. I reassured the President on this.

'We want the unity and national integrity of Sri Lanka to be preserved. At the same time I pointed out to the President that developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. In this matter India cannot be regarded as just any country. **Sri Lanka and India are the two who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate matters for both our countries.** We live in a region where many forces are at work, not all of which wish India or our neighbours well. Forces of destabilisation are at work. Hence we must make every effort to minimise any opportunity for foreign elements to weaken us.

Members are naturally worried about the possible involvement by other governments in the situation.

I asked the President about the reports that Sri Lanka had approached other governments. His reply was that America has promised some wheat and the UK some money . . .'

If there are some morals to be gathered from all these, they are: that public pronouncements by leaders cannot be always accepted at face value; that in today's complex world of geo-politics where nations will not hesitate to engage in conventional warfare if that was the only way to safeguard their strategic as well as economic interests, governments and heads of governments may not always behave on predictable lines! Inter-governmental relationships themselves have to be viewed in the spirit of cynicism that pervades every country's policy-making, keeping in mind the now trite saying that no country has permanent friends or permanent enemies, only permanent interests.

The issue today is not Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's affairs; because that is already there! It is Indian MILITARY intervention that is uppermost in the minds of both the Sinhalese and Tamils as well as probably the US State Department. It is hard to resist the conclusion that such a military intervention cannot be ruled out in the near forseeable future, the way the scenario is being built up in Sri Lanka and around.

Mrs Gandhi's Lok Sabha statement that 'India does not pose any threat to Sri Lanka' has to be weighed and tested alongside what she said immediately after — 'neither do we want to interfere in their internal affairs'. The fact was, a very pronounced Indian 'interference in the internal affairs' of Sri Lanka did take place on Tuesday the 19th July, 1983! On that day, (five days before the July violence began), Shankar Bajpai, then Foreign Secretary, now Indian ambassador to the US, summoned Sri Lanka High Commissioner Bernard Tillekeratne and expressed the concern of the Government of India 'at the highest level' over the happenings in Jaffna! Particular reference was made to the Emergency regulations permitting disposal of dead bodies without inquests.

Understandably from their point of view, the Sri Lanka Press went into hysterics on the 21st July, accusing India of 'meddling in the internal affairs' of Sri Lanka. Although the violence that erupted on the 24th overshadowed everything that went before, Colombo cannot ever forget that

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Bajpai summons easily. The view from Colombo is that the 'meddling' has been continuing ever since, perhaps in more polite, politic and diplomatic forms. A Colombo newspaper did in fact pose the question recently whether G. Parthasarathi had become a permanent fixture in the Sri Lanka landscape?

At the stage when India expressed concern over happenings in Jaffna, the timing seemed surprising because nothing was happening at that particular point of time which was worse than what was going on there for months and years earlier. But as I write this — early March — a sudden acceleration was occurring, militarily. The PTI report from Colombo dated March 2nd said: 'Residents in the Tamil provinces of Sri Lanka were woken up by midnight knocks as the army swung into a massive operation to comb out militant youths.' Battalions of heavily armed troops were moving in formations, as in a war, throwing rings around selected villages. Door-to-door manhunts were being carried out. During day, even schoolboys were stopped on their way to schools and examined.

The emergency law sanctioning quick cremations of dead bodies without inquests, over which India expressed concern on July 19th, 1983, continued to operate. Censorship was in force. What could possibly be the final chapter in this grim scenario? It could depend on two factors — how efficiently and how disciplined the army conducts its combing operation. The Sri Lanka army, known neither for its efficiency nor for its discipline, can easily convert the operation into a 'war' against a helpless civilian population. If that happens, the chances of Indian military intervention will certainly be maximised, and President Jayawardene and the Sinhala people will be the eventual losers. What then made the President, who cannot be unaware of these possibilities, undertake this gamble?

Open confrontation

The obvious reason would be that he was conceding under tremendous pressure from his own political ranks and Sinhala public opinion. Three People's Bank branches, in the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna districts (symbolically covering the proposed Tamil Eelam area from end to end) were stripped of Rs.53 million jewellery and cash by youth militants within the space of just over a month. Police and army informers were being 'executed' in public. Just when the army was planning to re-occupy its former camp at Gurunagar, the building was blasted by a bomb explosion. In the excitement that followed, an army man lost his life 'acccidentally' according to the government when 'a bullet richochetted'.

All these happenings in quick succession were making a severe dent on the Sinhala public's faith in the security forces and in Jayewardene's ability to contain the situation. He was therefore forced to launch a new tough offensive to 'wipe out terrorism'. But that could only be part of the explanation. There was another forceful reason: the President was facing a law and order problem in the south itself. A restive Sinhala population groaning under the increasing weight of economic burdens had to be distracted and pacified, and what better distraction than waging war against the 'terrorists' and the Tamils? But whatever the reasons were, it is now clear that the pace of events leading to a more open confrontation of the State machinery against the Tamils is being forced.

Whether Jayawardene's decision to force the pace stems out of a new confidence born out of a secret deal with the US government remains to be seen, but it certainly will make India think. India's peaceful, diplomatic options are also getting exhausted, and that is not a prospect that Mrs Gandhi can relish in an election year; unless she has other cards up her sleeve. It is also clear that President Jayawardene in his anxiety to salvage Sri Lanka's desperately poised economy with US aid, is fast drifting into a position where the choices are not his. In short, we are entering a phase where historical compulsions are taking charge of events, where even leaders, not excluding Mrs Gandhi, have to yield to these compulsions.

Certain actualities have after all to be recognised: Sri Lanka's increasing over-dependence on the US, a matter no longer within Sri Lanka's power of recall; the impact this will have on the non-aligned movement currently chaired by India; the inevitable changes it will bring in India's foreign policy perceptions in the Indian Ocean and South Asian region; the likely Soviet reaction to any high-visibility presence of the US in Sri Lanka.

It was the American philospher Santayana who said: 'Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.' While History might not offer exact parallels at any time, the lesson of Bangladesh is often forgotten, sometimes by Indian policy-makers themselves. The West, the US to be specific, is no longer in a position to respond decisively in the event of any military intervention in the South Asian region which has the sanction of the Soviets. The US failed in Bangladesh in 1971 and failed again in Afghanistan in 1979. Vietnam and Watergate had destroyed US confidence, and the furthest she can go is to use the CIA for destablising an area. The Grenada invasion itself proved to be a demonstration of US weakness rather than strength.

The next few months may very likely prove crucial to the Tamils in Sri Lanka. But it will be hard to imagine any kind of scenario without India figuring in the picture.

TO OUR READERS

Since commencing publication in October 1981, TAMIL TIMES has appeared monthly. Over 100,000 copies have been despatched to subscribers and non-subscribers. But from our records, we can safely say that not all recipients or readers have become subscribers.

In view of the frequent censorship and proscription of papers like the 'Saturday Review', TAMIL TIMES remains the only regular journal focussing attention on the problems facing the Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka. Its continued publication and indeed its expansion is absolutely crucial in the struggle against oppression and human rights violation in Sri Lanka.

This task cannot be performed by a few, however, dedicated they may be. All those who wish the paper well should contribute their share to this task. The least that one expects is:

★ FOR EVERY READER TO BECOME A SUBSCRIBER IMMEDIATELY; and

★ FOR EVERY SUBSCRIBER TO RENEW HIS/HER SUBSCRIPTION WHEN IT BECOMES DUE AND TO ENROL NEW SUBSCRIBERS.

Borrowing a subscriber's paper or making photocopies (a practice which seems to be widely prevalent) should be discouraged in the interest of the viability of the paper as a continuing effort.

★ — ★ — ★

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EXPLODING THE MYTHS (2)

ROLE OF TAMILS AND TAMIL NADU IN THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

That the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka was entirely due to the Sinhalese is a deliberately cultivated myth. That Buddhism in its heydays spread throughout South and South East Asia, to the Middle East and to central Asia is a fact of history. That this sweeping spread of Buddhism during that period meant that Tamils, who were traditionally Hindus, of the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka also became converted to Buddhism is also a fact. The presence of Buddhist archaeological remains in the traditional homelands of Tamils in Sri Lanka is due to the fact that many a Tamil became a Buddhist during that time.

However, chauvinists and religious bigots in Sri Lanka, who refuse to see Buddhism other than as 'Sinhala Buddhism', have tried to deny the fact that Tamils lived in the country, particularly in the north and the east, for over 2,500 years and more, by pointing to the presence of Buddhist remains and carry on with their false and malevolent propaganda that Tamils of Sri Lanka are 'interlopers', 'invaders' and 'south Indian foreigners' who had taken over lands which once belonged to the Sinhalese.

The address, reproduced on this page, delivered by Prof. V.I. Subramaniam, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tanjore, at the Convocation of the University of Jaffna in February 1984, portrays the role played by Tamil Nadu and Tamils in the spread of Buddhism not only in Sri Lanka but also in other countries.

It is both my duty and pleasure to thank the Senate of the University of Jaffna and the Dons headed by its erudite Vice-Chancellor, Prof. S. Vithiyananthan, for inviting me to deliver this year's Convocation address. Indeed, I am quite conscious of my limitations as a scholar and as an administrator to merit the two honours accorded to me. But the Tamil University I represent deserves both and I thank the Jaffna University, on behalf of the University of Tamil Nadu, for these favours while conveying its fraternal greetings to the sister University of Jaffna.

Uniting people for achieving social or religious goals is difficult. It is still more difficult when communication was undeveloped in the early centuries before and after Christ. Transcending national and geographical boundaries, Christianity spread through the power of the gospel, social services, and conquest. Mohammedanism spread by conquest throughout the Middle East, Africa and in South-East Asia. Buddhism by the preachings of the apostles spread throughout India, and in the west up to Greece, in the north up to China and southern parts of Russia and in South Asia, including Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Korea and Japan from the early centuries before Christ and thereafter. This religious unity of an international order is the forerunner of the United Nations Organisation of recent days. How difficult it is to maintain the civilised nations under this organisation is a fact well known to recent history!

Spread of Buddhism

The spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka from the Maurya capital in India is generally attributed to Mahinda, the son, and Sangamithra, the daughter of Asoka, who according to the early chronicles of Sri Lanka are said to have flown to Sri Lanka. But the vestiges unearthed in recent days as well as in the last century have brought to the fore the role played by Tamil Nadu in the spread of Theravada and other Schools of Buddhism in Ceylon and South Asian countries and its growth and development by erudite apostles who lived in Kanchipuram, Kaavirippuum Pattinam, Nagapattinam, Budhamangalam, Madurai and Tinnevelly, all in the Tamil country.

Besides the literary records of the Tamils, like the Sangam literature, the twin epics Silapptikaaram and Manimekalai, the remnants of Vimbisaarakatha, the grammar Veerasooliyam which was translated into Sinhalese, the Pali annotations, the chronicles of Sri Lanka, the notices of the Chinese travellers and the writings of the Western savants, whose respect for facts is only matched by the rigour of their interpretation, have thrown a flood of light on an area which is unknown or little known to many till this day.

Says Dhammapada:

'The gift of Truth excels all gifts,
The flavour of Truth excels all flavours,
The delight of Truth excels all delights.'

Since seeking truth is the goal of all universities the following facts will be of interest to us all:

The discovery of the Brahmi inscriptions in the Tinnevelly and Madurai Districts of Tamil Nadu in the rock-cut caves, in the early decades of this century, and their amended reading in the sixties have confirmed the conclave of Buddhist monks in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu. Ilam (Sri Lanka) has also been mentioned in one or two lithic records. On palaeographical grounds, they have been assigned to the first two centuries before Christ.

Chinese traveller

Hieun Tsang, the Chinese traveller (7th century AD), notes that the Buddhistic mission under Mahinda was directed first to the country of Malayukuuta below Dravida, that is Taamraparani country, from where Mahinda must have gone across to Simhala. Also Hieun Tsang speaks of a monastery built by Mahinda somewhere near Tanjore.

Dhammapaala, the second great Pali commentator, refers to a Vihara at Nagapattinam in South India, which was known as Dharmaasooka Maharaaja Vihaar.

Reverence

The village name Arittapatti in the Tinnevelly District recalls the memory of Aritta, the nephew and Chief Minister of King Devanampiya Tissa of Sri Lanka, confirming the reverence shown to the monk from Sri Lanka in the Tamil country.

Again King Gothaabhaya (300-322 AD) of Sri Lanka, invited a Mahayana monk by name Sanghamitra to solve the acute rivalry in Sri Lanka between Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhists. Buddha Datta, a contemporary of Buddhagosha, was an inhabitant of Kavirippuumpattinam about which he has paid a glowing tribute in the closing lines of Abhidihammaavataara.

In the closing lines of Vinayavinicchaya he praises Bhuutamangalam, the navel of the Cholas, which had a beautiful monastery.

Buddhagosha (5th century AD) in the

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colophon to his commentary on the Anguttara Nikaya otherwise called Manoorathapuurani refers to Kanchi as a centre of Pali studies and says that he was living in Kanchi with his friend Sumati and Jyotipaala at whose request he left for Sri Lanka.

Hieun Tsang has noted that Kanchi had more than 100 Buddhist monasteries with above 10,000 monks, all of them of the Sthavira School.

During the time of Hemasiitala's rule in Kanchi, (8th century AD) this place was the scene of a religious disputation in which Akalanka, the Jain monk, is said to have defeated Buddhists and driven them to Sri Lanka.

Bodhi Dharma

The Dhyana School of Buddhism developed in Kanchi was introduced to China and later to Japan by Bodhi Dharma (527 AD). Viharas in memory of him are found in China and Japan, though he was forgotten in the Tamil country. He was the third son of the king of Kanchi.

After him in 727 AD, Vajra Bodhi who studied in Nalanda and was the teacher of the king of Kanchi, went to Sri Lanka from where he sailed to China. He translated eleven works and spread Tantric Buddhism and died in 732 AD in China.

Besides Kanchi and Kaveripuumpattinam, Nagapattinam was a Buddhistic centre. In 720 AD Narasimhavarma-I constructed a temple in favour of the Emperor of China and a placard sent by the Emperor of China was placed on the front wall of the temple. This temple was pulled down by the French Jesuits in 1867.

The Kalyani inscription from Burma corroborates the Buddhistic Vihara in Nagapattinam, which all foreign travellers visited.

Land grants

Larger Leiden Grant of Raja Raja-I and the small Leiden Grant of Kulottunga-I mention about the endorsement of land grants for the upkeep of the Vihara called Cuulaamani Vihara built in honour of the king of Sri Vijaya.

The Sailendra king constructed two viharas, Raja Raja Perumpalli and Rajendra Perumpalli there.

According to Gandavamsa the three main centres of Theravada Buddhism in South India were Kanchipuram, Kaviripuumpattinam and Madurai.

Budhaghosa, the great commentator of Theravada scripture, lived in different times at different places in South India. At Mathura, he lived with Buddhamitta and wrote Papancasudani, a commentary on Majjhima Nikava. At Kanchipuram he lived with Ven Jothipala and wrote Sarathapakksmi, a commentary on the Samyutta Nikaya. The chronicles of Sri Lanka tell us about his sojourn in Sri Lanka where at Anuradhapura his great work Visuddimagga and other commentaries were composed in the reign of King Mahanama (409-431 AD).

Contemporary

A contemporary of Buddhagosa was Buddhatta Thera, who lived and worked in Kanchi, Kavirippuumpattinam and Anuradhpura in Sri Lanka.

The author of Culavamsa, supplement to the Mahavamsa carrying the history of Sri Lanka from Mahasena (334-362 AD) to Parakramabahu-II (1236-1268), was Dharmakirti (13th century AD) who hailed from the Pandya country. He organised in Sri Lanka an international conference of Buddhists. The Dattuvamsa is also assigned to him.

Many centuries of continued intellectual exchange between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka in Buddhistic studies as evidenced by epigraphs, foreign notices and Pali scriptures is further confirmed by the literature of Tamils.

The earliest strata of Tamil literature called the Sangham collections have direct and indirect references to Buddhistic tenets. Some Sangham poets have identifiable Buddhistic names. It is in the epics Sillappathikaaram and Manimekalai proofs of Buddhistic influence of an incontrovertable nature are found. While Sillappathikaaram which deifies a woman of the merchant community and unites the three traditional warring kingdoms of Tamil Nadu, Manimekalai for the first time unites Chaavakam (the modern Sumatra) and other countries of the South Asia in its fold, while unfolding the story of Manimekalai, the daughter of Koavalan and Madhavi.

Well versed

The author, Cittalai Sattanar of Madurai, was well versed in Buddhistic literature and logic. The Jataka stories were familiar to him. The rigorous logic adopted by Buddhists is elaborately described by the author even at the cost of the requirement of an epic poem. The logical tenets of Manimekalai have no parallel in Buddhistic or Sanskrit texts but are found to have resemblance in the Tibetan texts. It is too early to say who borrowed from whom.

But the similarity of the tenets will not prevent us making an inference that they had a wider spread. The 30th chapter explains the Hinayana School of Buddhism. Vanchi the capital of Cheras, like Kanchi, had a flourishing Buddhistic congregation. The sea goddess Manimekalai was popular in the South Asian countries including Cambodia. The Manipallavam is identified as the Nainatiivu of Sri Lanka. The heroine Manimekalai was converted to Buddhism by Aravana Adigal who is identified by some as Dhammapaala born in Kanchi, went to Nalanda where he became the head of the University.

Bhakti movement

During the Bhakti movement Gnana Sambantha defeated Saariputia, who belonged to the Theravaada School in a dispute. The Naayanmars and Alwars held disputes with Buddhistic scholars in Madurai, Kanchi, Bodhimangalam, Nagapattinam had a strong Buddhistic conclave even after the defeat in disputes led by the Alwars and Nayanmars. Rajaratnakari (819 AD) mentions about a Buddhist king of Sri Lanka embracing Saivism at Chidambaram during the times of Manikavasakar.

Another piece of Tamil literature of which remnants are found is Vimbisaarakatha, The Grammar Viira Choliyam (11th century AD) marks a turning point in the history of Tamil grammar which has been translated into Sinhalese also.

Besides the direct references, the Dhammapada, which is a solace to the young and old, the rich and poor, has innumerable parallels in the well known Thirukkural and other works which are classed as the eighteen anthologies in the history of Tamil literary tradition.

Any country which practises Buddhism in South Asia cannot forget its great debt to Tamil Nadu, especially to Kanchi and Nagappattinam. Neither China nor Japan nor Sumatra or Burma has failed to remember their great debt to Tamil Nadu. How can Sri Lanka, the next-door neighbour, forget the role of Tamil Nadu in the spread of Theravada Buddhism and the great intellectual exchanges between its monks and those in Kanchi?

The Dhammapada defines a wise man thus: 'He is not thereby a wise man merely because he speaks much.' Those words of caution worthy of emulation indeed is a fitting pada to close this address.

'The gift of Truth excels all gifts,
The flavour of Truth excels all flavours,
The delight of Truth excels all delights.'

— Dhammapada

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POLICE ACCUSED OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY SRI LANKAN ATTORNEY GENERAL

Allegations of violations of human rights by the Sri Lankan police are under investigation by the Attorney-General, Mr Siva Pasupathy.

The Attorney-General said that there were instances where the police have taken persons suspected of committing other offences which do not come within the purview of the Emergency Regulations, being detained for long periods in police custody.

Smuggling

Citing some cases, he pointed out that even a person caught smuggling could be detained for ninety days by the police saying he was suspected of having links with terrorists.

Mr Pasupathy expressed the view that it was known that certain police officers took relatives of wanted men into custody as hostages. Police procedures were not followed in certain police stations, he said.

Although there was a register known as the Lock-up Register, entries were not made in certain cases. So that even when a complaint was made to higher authorities, it was possible for the police to deny that the suspect in question had been taken into custody.

In the present situation, the Attorney-General has suggested that a special unit consisting of officers from outside the area in which alleged human rights violations had been committed, should be set up to inquire into complaints by aggrieved parties. The CID, too, could be co-opted to such a unit so that impartial investigations could be made.

A former State Counsel, Mr Daya Perera, said that the police were guilty of unjustified arrests, unfair interrogation, illegal detention and other abuses.

He said the term 'police' had in modern life acquired sinister significance, for who did not know and shudder at what was termed 'police state'?

Quite simple

Their functions were, in theory, quite simple. Upon a complaint, information or suspicion, they were statutorily empowered to investigate, take into custody the alleged offender and produce him before court so that he could be dealt with according to the law.

The practice of this exercise had, however, been riddled with transgressions of the law and violations of basic human rights, he said.

NEW MOVES ON 'STATELESS'

Political circles expect an early announcement by the government on the question of 'stateless' persons of Indian origin resident in Sri Lanka.

Some time back India's Foreign Minister told that country's Lok Sabha that President Jayawardene had assured him that he would solve the 'stateless' question within six months.

CWC leader Minister S. Thondaman has also said that he had not raised this matter at the All-Party Conference because of a similar assurance given to him by President Jayawardene.

The first indication that a move was afoot was when the Venerable Mahanayake Thero of the Malwatte Chapter suddenly appeared before the APC from which he had been absent on earlier occasions, and, to the obvious satisfaction and approval of the President, advised him to grant citizen ship to all stateless persons of Indian origin.

After this, the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha has also backed such a move by the government.

Following this, the DAILY NEWS (February 22nd) published a lead story that there was a growing consensus among major religious organisations and political circles that the issue of statelessness of persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka should be resolved.'

Social justice

Political circles are of the opinion that social justice has little or nothing to do with such developments in the ranks of the government.

Instead, it is being openly argued that stateless persons of Indian origin should be given citizenship in order not to give India, especially Tamil Nadu, an excuse for armed intervention in Sri Lanka!

Another favourite argument in government circles is that the number of stateless persons involved is less than one lakh and therefore can be 'absorbed' without much difficulty.

A third argument is that such a move will 'pacify' Indian opinion and 'take the heat off', even if the problems of the Sri Lanka Tamils are not settled by the APC.

There is, however, a strong centre of resistance within the government to any move to make the 'stateless', citizens of the country.

Opinion within the SLFP on this matter is divided. The majority opinion here seems to favour trying to resurrect the Sirima-Shastri Pact which had now lapsed and which India says is no longer enforceable.

The Left parties favour the grant of citizenship to all 'stateless' persons who want to make this country their permanent home and who apply to be its citizens.

Over 97 per cent of the 'stateless' persons are plantation workers who, although they produce the main part of the country's wealth, are the lowest paid and most exploited.

PROBLEM OF DISPLACED UNDERGRADS

The problem of Tamil students displaced from the Universities in South Sri Lanka continues without any positive steps being taken by the government to provide alternative arrangements to continue their education.

According to the Displaced Tamil Undergraduates' Union, nearly 1,800 students have been affected by the incidents of July last year.

The breakdown of the numbers orginally affected, as provided by the Union, is as follows:

Colombo University — 247 (Faculties of Medicine and Law)

Peradeniya University — 1,252 (Faculties of Engineering, Medicine, Dental Science, Agriculture, Veterinary Science and Arts).

Moratuwa University — 230 (Faculties of Engineering, Architecture and National Diploma in Technology).

The demand of the Union, formed at the Jaffna University in September last year, is that all the affected students be found accommodation at the Jaffna and Batticaloa Universities.

A Union spokesman said that the demand of the Government that all these students should return to their respective Universities was 'most unreasonable'.

He asked: 'How could we return when there is no guarantee of physical safety? Students at Peradeniya University, who were first affected by the incidents in May 1983, returned after accepting the assurance of security given by the Government, only to be subjected to violence again in July the same year.'

He noted that the 300 Sinhalese students who were at the Jaffna University had not

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received a similar ultimatum to return from the Ministry of Higher Education.

After the fast-unto-death begun at the Jaffna Campus by five boys and four girls in January, President Jayawardene invited a delegation from the Union to meet him to discuss their problems.

Following this meeting, a Committee, headed by the Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education, Dr F.S. Kalpage, was appointed to explore the possibilities of accommodating the students at the Jaffna and Batticaloa Universities.

But the Union spokesman said: 'We have no faith in Dr Kalpage.'

The other members of the Committee included Dr. S Vithiananthan, Vice-Chancellor of the Jaffna University, Professor Tony Rajaratnam, Director of Batticaloa Campus, and some student delegates.

Observers of the student scene in Jaffna say that it is in the larger national interest that this problem is tackled soon — and tackled in a humane manner.

TAMIL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSAULTED

Tamil undergraduates belonging to the Agricultural faculty were severely assaulted, terrorised and chased away by fellow Sinhalese students when they returned to the Agricultural Training Centre at Mahaillupalama, Anuradhapura during the first week of February.

Prior to their return, the Government Agent of Jaffna, Mr D. Nesiah had requested that the Tamil students be transferred to the campuses in the north and east of Sri Lanka. This request was turned down by Prof. Gunasekera, the Head of the Faculty of Agriculture, who said that there was a police station within three miles of the Training Centre and that therefore there was no danger to the safety of the Tamil students.

Rs.1 MILLION REWARD

A spate of bank robberies in recent weeks in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, has resulted in the government ordering the closure of several branches of the major banks in these provinces, causing great hardship to the people of the area.

The People's Bank was the major casualty when its branches in Kathankuddy, Kinniya and Chankanai were stripped of Rs.53 million in cash and jewellery.

The bank has offered a reward of one million rupees for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for the robbery at its Kathankudy branch where the raiders ran away with Rs.36 million worth of loot. Although special teams of police have been assigned to investigate these robberies, so far they have failed even to trace the identity of the robbers.

MAURITIUS

SEMINAR ON 'GENOCIDE' IN SRI LANKA

The Mauritius Temples Federation organised a seminar on the 'GENOCIDE' of Tamils in Sri Lanka, on December 17, 1983. The aims of the seminar were:

To make the Mauritian public, especially those of Tamil ethnic group aware of the real and true situation prevailing in Sri Lanka.

To make an in-depth analysis of all the aspects of the problems in Sri Lanka and thereafter to vote a number of resolutions. These resolutions will be communicated to the following governments: e.g. France, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, India, United Kingdom, USA, USSR, China, Australia, etc., and to International Bodies, e.g., Amnesty International, International Commission of Jurists, so that these governments and International Bodies may help find a just, equitable and lasting solution to the problems in Sri Lanka.

To consolidate the Solidarity Fund set up by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, which fund will come to the help of the victims of the recent communal violence in Sri Lanka.

Historical aspects

The agenda of the seminar included speeches by Mr.P Veeraragoo, President of the Mauritius Tamil Temples' Federation, the Indian High Commissioner, and the Mauritian Minister of Education, Hon. A. Parasuraman. There was an expose on (a) Historical aspects of the problems in Sri Lanka by Mr S. Appasamy; (b) Political, socio-cultural aspects by Mr Cathan Chetty; and (c) Economic Aspects by Mr P. Veeraragoo. This was followed by group discussions on all these three aspects. A video film projection of 'JAFFNA ON FIRE' was also shown.

The President of the Federation, in his speech, emphasised that a mere expression of concern about the outbreaks of communal violence was not enough; genuine efforts had to be undertaken to arrive at a just and equitable solution.

The Mauritian Minister of Education, Arts and Culture, Mr A.Parasuraman, said that the seminar was one of the important means by which public opinion could be alerted to the massacres that were taking place in Sri Lanka.

He said that the government of Mauritius was aware of the serious problems affecting a section of the population of Sri Lanka and pointed out that Prime Minister Jagnauth made an intervention, on humanitarian grounds, at the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations concerning the violence against the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

He said that, in order to aid the victims of the violence, the government of Mauritius had already contributed a sum of Rs.100,000 to the Sri Lanka Solidarity Fund, and recalled that a sum of Rs.20,000 was donated in aid of the reconstruction of the Jaffna Public Library which was maliciously burnt down.

Very concerned

Mr Rajagopalan, Deputy High Commissioner of India, underlined the fact that the Indian government was very concerned about the problems faced by the Tamils of Sri Lanka and was active on the diplomatic front to bring about a just and peaceful solution.

At the end of the seminar, thirteen resolutions were passed, which included (a), a call for the reinstatement of all properties destroyed, or payment of compensation for all losses incurred by the Tamils of Sri Lanka; (b) that the government of Mauritius should not invite Sri Lankan sportsmen until a reasonable settlement was effected; (c) that voluntary contributions should be organised to aid the Tamil refugees;

(d) expression of solidarity with Tamil people and parties of Sri Lanka; (e) that a separate state of Tamil Eelam be established to ensure that oppression was stopped; (f) that world opinion should be alerted to the problems of the Tamils in Sri Lanka; and (g) that moral, financial and other forms of support be given to the Tamil liberation movements in Sri Lanka.

Jobs in Zimbabwe

The Tamil Rescue Appeal has been informed that the Government of Zimbabwe is currently recruiting qualified personnel in the following fields:

- **Teaching: Qualified teachers holding teaching experience and acceptable degrees;**
- **Medical: Qualified Medical Practioners who are registerable with the British Medical Association and the Zimbabwe Medical Association.**
- **Engineering: Qualified civil, electrical, mechanical, agricultural, irrigation and drainage engineers with not less than five years' experience.**

Inquiries may be made from the Zimbabwe High Commission in London.

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'TO BE SURE THERE IS MORAL DEGENERATION'

The Overseas Sri Lankans Organisation for National Unity (OSLONU) based in Melbourne, Australia, has called for a 'thorough investigation' into the July 1983 racial violence to ensure that there was no repetition.

It added: **'It is also necesary to determine why a large majority of peace-loving and a generally compassionate population stood by and did nothing or little in the way of stopping the carnage and destruction that took place.**

There were those who took part in such bestial acts as burning people alive and making fun when their victims were writhing in agony.

'It is necessary to determine what motivated them to act in this manner. To be sure, there is a moral degeneration in the country, even if it is only a small section of the population that actually acted this way.

'This association should organise a sociological study to be carried out, say, by the University of Sri Lanka, with financial assistance from Australian academic institutions in order to determine the causes for such inhuman action by a section of population which has had a highly regarded civilisation of over 2,000 years.'

It was suggested that the association finance specific projects which would help to improve communal relations in Sri Lanka. For example, it could help to rebuild a village in Vavuniya which was destroyed during the riots.

Teaching assignment

The association could also provide a suitably qualified volunteer to undertake a teaching assignment at a tertiary institution in Jaffna such as the medical school to build a dialogue between the association and the people of Jaffna.

It was also suggested that the association initiate the formation of a group of all-Sri Lankan students in Australia and encourage them to meet regularly and discuss the islands's problems.

JUST SOCIETY IN JULY 1983

By Basil Fernando Wattala, Sri Lanka

You burned the buildings
And put me in prison
You threw their infants into fire
and called me inhuman
You murdered in the open daylight
and blamed me for wanting blood
You turned my neighbour a refugee
And said, I am responsible
You looted his hard-earned property
And called me a thief
You imprisoned him and killed him
and named me a brute.
You befriended thugs and I the victims
but you made me the accused.

I who was grieved
at my school mate,
My neighbour, my friend
My guru and fellow worker,
When he died, when he went into hiding,
When he fled to escape the mob,
suddenly departed to other lands
empty-handed – I who cried holding hands
at the Harbour biding him farewell
am now to bear this insult.

You say it's peace
When you put the blame on the innocent
You say it's stability
When you protect culprits
You say it's honesty
When you hide the reports
and hush the inquiries
Spread falsehood among the nations
Having a laugh at a restless nation,
Divided and wounded.

You sleep well,
But I cannot sleep
You eat well
I have lost appetite
You have friends
I have lost mine
You think you are successful
I know, wounds of defeat
Will live with me long
And the memory
of this insult.

(By kind courtesy of CHRISTIAN WORKER)

U.N. ASSOCIATION CONCERN OVER SRI LANKA

Michael Gorton, President of the Victoria Division of the United Nations Association of Australia, has sent the letter appearing below to Bill Hayden, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Australian Parliament:

Dear Mr Hayden,

Re: Persecution of Tamil people of Sri Lanka

This Division has received reports and complaints from Tamil people formerly of Sri Lanka, alleging persecution, torture and substantial denial of human rights to the Tamil people in Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan Government. We enclose a copy of a report received from the Ceylon Tamil Association of Victoria for your information.

This Division views these allegations with concern and requests your advice as to:

1. What steps the Australian Government has taken to verify and substantiate such claims?
2. Whether the Australian Government will support an independent UN-sponsored inquiry of these allegations?
3. What explanations or response (if any) have been received from the Sri Lankan Government in relation to these allegations?

We note that submissions have been made in relation to these matters to the UN Human Rights Committee and have the support of such notable organisations as Amnesty International and the World Council of Churches. We would appreciate your due consideration of these matters.

Michael Gorton,
President

'LANKAN TAMILS ARE PERSECUTED' – West German Court

Members of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka can justifiably apply for asylum in West Germany on the grounds of political persecution, North Rhine-Westpalia's highest administrative Court held on January 27.

The Court said that it based its ruling on 'important reasons' for believing that Sri Lankan Tamils, especially members of the Tamil separatist movement, were threatened with political persecution. A number of Tamils, citing the treaty on persecution, have sought asylum in West Germany in recent years.

The Court said the ruling resulted from an application for political asylum made in 1977 by a Tamil family, apparantly on appeal following its rejection by the West German authorities.

The Court also said that the Sri Lankan government even in recent months had not been able to guarantee sufficient protection for Tamils.

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REHABILITATION OF REFUGEES – AN APPEAL

The Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation has made the following appeal to support those who have been rendered refugees as a result of the violent events of July 1983

Since Independence, at regular intervals, the Tamils in this country have been subjected to violence in various forms and in varying degrees. The fault, as our Sinhalese brothers see it, is our claim to live with them as equals as a matter of right.

The holocausts of 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981 drove the middle and working class Tamil in the South to look for safety in the North and the East. The pogrom of July/August 1983 was so devastating in its effect that class distinctions vanished overnight and every Tamil, be he Sri Lankan or Indian, looks for safety in the North and the East.

The Sri Lankan Tamils with their roots still in the North or in the East have not been rendered that helpless as our Indian brothers who fight an incessant battle to keep both body and soul together. Thousands of their families are now in refugee camps in the North or in the East with the full expectation that we will stand by them in this hour of need.

Indelible

Government is keen to send back these refugees to their original homes. Financial inducements have not been that effective. The reason is that the sufferings of July/August 1983 are so fresh in their minds that they dread the thought of having to re-live this ordeal, leave alone the humiliations which they have suffered, and which have left indelible impressions. A large majority of them want to live in the North and in the East or go back to India. The former is within our reach if every Tamil puts his shoulder to the wheel. The latter is not within our power.

Settling these refugees has been made extremely difficult by the government's decision not to allow settlements in Crown lands. The alternative is to settle them in private lands. Private land-owners are willing to part with their lands only at a price.

The Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation was formed after the 1977 riots with the avowed object of providing homes for the refugees on purely humanitarian considerations. Our people are aware of the useful work the Organisation has been doing in this direction.

The TRRO Ltd., which is a non-profit making body, has taken the place of the TRRO. We are now engaged in assisting the settlement of refugees through reputed Social and Religious Organisations. The magnitude of the task is such that every organisation with Service as its objective should come forward to meet the challenge. We have however in our humble way drawn out plans to rehabilitate at least one thousand families. Funds for this purpose are expected from benefactors, both in our land and abroad.

To settle a refugee family, it costs between Rs. 25,000/- to Rs.40,000/-:

Construction of one small house with cement floor, tiled roof	25,000/-
Tools & implements for manual work & cooking utensils	1,000/-
Seed paddy/seed potatoes or cereals (as case may be)	750/-
One cow	3,000/-
Small-scale poultry farm	1,000/-
Sustenance for one family at Rs.300/- per mth, for 6 mths	1,800/-
Land — one acre in extent	4,000/-
	Rs:36,550/-

If the house is constructed with wattle and daub the cost will be around Rs:15,000/-. This does not make provision for a well as it is our intention to construct one well for very five families. The average cost of constructing a well will be around Rs: 20,000/-.

Rehabilitation

Along with the rehabilitation of refugees, we are also granting financial assistance to the dependents of the Bread-Winners who have been killed during the recent communal disturbances. Towards this we have already paid out of our collection a little over Rs.100,000/-. Although these families are not living in camps their plight is equally pathetic. They need continued assistance.

Their anguish and uncertainty of even one square meal a day, the rags in which they are clothed, the tilting, ill-lit houses, are but some of the conditions in which they live. The morrow does not hold any promise for them. These families too need a helping hand.

Families

In short, they are at our mercy and the extent to which their suffering can be alleviated depends on our generosity. In order to provide these families food, clothing and education we need at least Rs.100,000/- per month.

The purpose of this letter is to enlist the support of your Association / Society / Centre / Organisation / Institution for this cause. We request that you contribute your share towards the realisation of the objective. Our request is a modest one: Give us the funds to settle one or more families. If that is not within your reach, please find the funds to provide only the house for one family. If that too is difficult please collect funds to buy a cow (Rs.3,000/-) for one family. Even if that is not possible please contribute whatever you can.

Remittances may be made by cheque drawn in favour of TRRO Ltd, and crossed 'A/C PAYEE ONLY' (Our bank account is with the Commercial Bank of Ceylon Limited, Jaffna — A/C No.12503). Payment may also be made direct at our Jaffna office, 66 Chapel Street.

Under the existing conditions, the progress has to be slower than in 1977, the cost higher and the toil more exacting. With guidance of Divine Grace, we are confident we will succeed.

Yours sincerely,

K. Visuvalingam
Chairman
TRRO Ltd.

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EVOLUTION OF THE TAMIL QUESTION (Part II)

THE COLLAPSE OF PARLIAMENT

BY PROF. KARTHIGESU SIVATHAMBY
Professor Sivathamby, Jaffna University, is a Scholar of Tamil Languages, Culture and Drama

(Continued from last issue)

A survey of Tamil political demands and activities in Sri Lanka since 1977, including an analysis of the socio-economic and ideological orientation of the struggle. Reproduced by kind courtesy of LANKA GUARDIAN of February 15

The parliamentary elections of 1977 brought out in clear terms the pattern of political polarisation in the country. Except for a few seats in the East (e.g. Kalkudah) the TULF emerged the dominant political party of the Tamils. The SLFP debacle (8 seats) made TULF the major opposition group in the parliament and Amarthalingam, the leader of the Opposition. It is true this leader of the opposition was not in any way the alternate Prime Minister, as the British parliamentary practice would have it, but in this leadership, the collapse of the left and the inevitable ethnic polarisation of the country was fully manifest. The writing was on the wall.

Since independence it has been the parliamentary practice to have one: at best two, Ministers from the Tamil community and allocate them such portfolios as Posts or Local Government; this was done to express the composite 'national' character of the government. The ULF government of 1970 had to get a non-elected member to the Cabinet. The UNP did not have such a problem. K.W. Devanayagam was already there and was made Minister of Justice. But the art of Cabinet making is also the craft of cutting the grass from under the feet of the political opponents. The UNP government of 1977 resorted to this by weaning away C.Rajadurai, the first MP for Batticaloa and considered one of the pillars of the TULF in the East. The government had to legalise this breakaway by an amendment to the constitution. But the most important inclusion was that of Thondaman, which, in terms of UNP strategy, assured the breakdown of the TULF, and more than that, ensured smooth labour relations in the plantation sector.

The J.R. Jayawardene Cabinet is significant in the history of Sri Lankan Tamil politics, in that, for the first time now, there was no Minister from the North. It was difficult to get a breakthrough among the TULF MPs; also the strategy was to show the absence of Tamil participation in the UNP Cabinet is one relating to the North only; and that other Tamil interests were represented accordingly.

Having thus singled out the North for special treatment, an attempt was made to make a UNP thrust into the North through the party organisation. UNP branches were opened and organisers (for electorates) were appointed. This system of political patronage of the party in power was not something new. The SLFP had in the period 1970-1977 established the norms and traditions of this practice.

At this point, it is necessary to refer to an important aspect of the Sri Lankan Tamils, especially those of Jaffna. Jaffna, because of its long colonial subjugation, the longest in Sri Lanka has perfected over the centuries the art of plucking socio-economic benefits from the government in existence, pretending ideological concurrence, but never allowing any change in its basic socio-economic relations.

Grassroots level

In fact, this game of 'being close to the ruler' was played with manifest devotion and commitment to maintain and foreserve the social dominance of the retailers of authority at the grassroots level. In a community that was away from real political power, back-door retailing of political patronage was developed as an art. There was a time when one had to pretend to be a Christian. Now , it was only a case of erecting a few pandals and ordering a few garlands. Another line of communication for patronage was through such forms of association with Sinhalese as classmates.

The system had been perfected so well that there had always been somebody 'influential' with some Minister. Perhaps the only exception was the Dahanayake Cabinet. Not that Dahanayake did not have a Tamil friend. But his period of office was too short for such relationships to develop. Thus there were SLFP organisers in the early and the mid-seventies, now there were the UNP organisers. The system was so well entrenched that even the leftist leaders in the UF Cabinet were considered accessible to some. But such men were not the acclaimed left leaders. The leading leftists of Jaffna were never suspected of political opportunism, but those SLFP and UNP organisers were. This explains the hostility of the youth towards these black marketeers of political patronage.

The UNP had one advantage in its early years. There was a feeling among the English-educated senior citizens, the opinion leaders of Jaffna, that J.R. Jayawardene, unlike the plebeian SLFPers, would do something tangible.

But the most disturbing feature in the UNP approach to the national question was that while on one hand there were these attempts to dismember the TULF at geographical and sub-cultural levels, there was a vociferous anti-Tamil, Sinhala-Buddhist lobby at work in the Sinhala areas. Cyril Mathew, the Minister for Industries, was the leader and ideologist of this movement.

The main thrust of this propaganda went against the very basis of the UNP's name on the national question as publicised in their election manifesto. With such forces within the party in power, the round table conference referred to in the manifesto was an impossibility. Nevertheless, the Tamil problem was a **real** one and effort had to be taken to solve it.

The TULF position was equally self-contradictory. Here was a party that had won the election on the pledge that 'the members, when elected, besides being members of parliament, will also be members of the National Council of Tamil Eelam working out a constitution for Tamil Eelam and taking steps, through peaceful means or direct struggles to bring into existence Tamil Eelam and to consolidate it.'

Such a party has been called upon to voice the discontents of all the people, Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers against the government. The TULF was not ideologically ready for such a role.

However, getting caught to a situation like this, in which there is a gap between what is immediately around — the reality — was not something new to them. There had always been a gap between their rhetoric and the reality. The dominant partner of the TULF was the FP, which,

"But the most disturbing feature of the UNP approach to the national question was that while on the one hand there were these attempts to dismember the TULF at geographical and sub-cultural levels, there was a vociferous anti-Tamil, Sinhala-Buddhist lobby at work in Sinhala areas. Cyril Mathew, the Minister for Industries, was the leader and the ideologist of this movement"

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when it demanded federalism (Samasti or Kudiardchi) had called itself the Illankai Tamil Arasu Katchi, the Sri Lankan Tamil State Party. It was the semantics of the term **'Tamil Arasu'** that had been exploited against the FP and its demand.

This time they had additional problems. Its own youth wing and the emerging movement of youth militancy wanted them to reject the parliamentary road to Tamil liberation.

With increasing polarisation of view, it was not possible for the new Executive President to satisfy the TULF with a nominal raising of Tamil to the status of a national language. Something substantial had to be given in terms of regional autonomy.

Commissioners

The District Development Committee was the concept that was developed to meet this need. A Presidential Commission was appointed with a TULF nominee also in it (Neelan Tiruchelvam). In the report submitted, the majority commissioners took the view that the 'Commission was not appointed to or required to examine the ethnic problems which have manifested themselves in the demand for a separate state (but) . . . directed to devise a system of devolution and democratic decentralisation which would enable the people of the twenty-four districts to define their development priorities, to energise the district administration and give impetus to the process of social and economic transformation'.

TULF's acceptance of the DDC proposal created a major split in the party. Coming as it did after the racial riots of 1979, the TULF had to face bitter opposition from its rank and file. Their youth wing collapsed and the 'Sutandiran' group, (Sutandiran was the official organ of the party. The paper was owned in main by the family of the late S.J.V. Chelvanayakam) led by Chandrahasan, Kovai Mahesan, Dr Tharmalingam and Eelaventan broke away from the TULF. Objective analysts of the DDC Act said it was too little too late.

Balakrishnan in his analysis of the DDC Act stated —

'The main provisions of the Development Council Act relating to the organisational structure and the relationship between the different institutions do have a resemblance to the principles and arrangement suggested in the dissenting report (of Neelan Tiruchelvam). But this is only in form and not in substance, for the actual power relations between the Centre and the districts have been weighed more in favour of the agencies of the Centre.'

Before this prediction ultimately proved correct much to the bitterness of the TULF, the elections held for the DDC's eroded the very concept of electoral democracy —

'A grama sevaka, an office messenger (peon) several village level cultivation officers, junior clerks and assistant teachers were amongst those who officiated as senior presiding officers at the elections to the Jaffna District Development Council. These were not officials duly elected by the Commissioner of Elections but were hand-picked by the higher command of the United National Party. Altogether 150 officials picked by the Commissioner of Elections were replaced by nominees of the ruling party just before the poll.'

Several ballot boxes were missing and were never recovered.

The elections were held during the period of police and army excesses unleashed after the Neervely Robbery of People's Bank money. The DDC elections were held three days after the burning of the Public Library. It is important to note that TULF was the only opposition party taking part in the DDC polls, trying to fulfil its part of the obligation. In spite of the major disruption caused people voted en masse for the TULF.

It is interesting to note that in the context of contemporary events the entire idea that the DDCs were primarily aimed at the question of solving the problems of the Tamils was lost sight of.

Commenting on the parliamentary debates on the police excesses in Jaffna, the Lobbyist of 'Lanka Guardian' (15.6.1981), said:

'Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake did not contradict any of the basic facts given in Mr Amirthalingam's detailed and vivid account of the days and nights of terror and rampage in Jaffna. Explaining the situation, the Minister spoke of near mutiny in the police. Surely that points to the first step. The vast majority of the people of Jaffna desire to live their ordinary day-to-day lives in peace. Those who are duty-bound to guarantee peace and order cannot be the instrument of lawlessness, disorder and security. **When normal conditions are restored (not merely physical but psychological) then real political solutions be considered if the main parties to the dispute are capable of facing up to that daunting challenge.**'

The emphasised part reveals clearly that the whole idea that DDCs in themselves were an attempt at a political solution was forgotten at that stage. Such had been the extent of mishandling of the democratic processes.

This is followed by the No-confidence motion on the Leader of the Opposition moved by Neville Ferdando; this itself contributed to the credibility of the parliamentary system to evolve the necessary framework for a meaningful solution to the Tamil question.

The Presidential Election of 1982 revealed the loss of faith of Tamils in Jayawardene. The SLFP candidate polled more votes than the President in Jaffna.

What was left of the faith in parliamentary politics was further eroded with the referendum in late 1982, which sought to lengthen the life of the parliament up to 1989.

Local elections

The local elections of 1983 were a landmark in that the militant youths called for a boycott of the elections and forced many of the contestants to withdraw their candidature. Many of the Chairmen and members of Councils decided not to take office.

The manner in which the Tamil question was treated by the parliament also reveals the gradual devaluation of parliament as an effective forum within the executive presidential system.

The increasing pressure of the militant youth movement and the impact of their extra-parliamentary tactics was soon brought within the parliamentary focus, when the TULF decided to nominate Kuttimani, one of the militant youths held in detention, to the vacant seat of the Vaddukokodai constituency. This symbolises in a way the fusion of the lines of Tamilian struggle, and quite understandably provided the extremist Sinhala force with the opportunity of charging that the TULF was completely involved in terrorist activities. The TULF, in its turn, argued that it was done to highlight the state repression that the Tamils are facing.

When it was ruled that Kuttimani could not sit as an MP in parliament, the TULF nominated Neelan Tiruchelvam, their leading intellectual and by now their chief negotiator. His nomination was taken as an indication of the leadership of the TULF, unaccustomed as they were to the styles of metropolitan lobbies, accepting the need for a Colombo-based person to make itself more effective in such dialogues.

With the July events and the logical expression the ideology behind the events in the sixth amendment, designed to pacify the Sinhala demands, parliament ceased to be the national forum in which the

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

" At the level of the Sinhalese, the ethnic cry, (first priority in terms of language now in terms of religion) is whipped up to complete a process of establishing class hegemony started prior to independence but in greater earnest after 1956. At the Tamil end, the ethnic cry has become the rallying point against common oppression"

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PRESIDENT vs THE PRELATE

Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula, recently described by President Jayawardene as 'my Parthasarathy', clashed openly with the President at a recent prize-giving held at the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Colombo.

Dr Rahula, a Buddhist priest, represents the Maha Sangha (the Buddhist clergy) at the Round Table Talks. Taking a rather un-Buddhist attitude, the Prelate suggested stern measures to wipe out the 'terrorists of the north'. He said that 'all resources should be directed for the eradication of terrorism even if it meant having to call a halt to development work' in the country.

Publicly accused

He publicly accused the President of having been 'responsible for the July 1983 violence because he (President) failed to curb terrorism in the north'. The killing and maiming of thousands of Tamils, including women and children, did not seem to bother Dr Rahula. He was only concerned with the wiping out of terrorism from the north.

His in-depth knowledge of Buddhism, the cornerstone of which is the Karmic theory based on the concept of cause and effect, did not help him to understand or explain the causes that have led to the phenomenon of political 'terrorism'.

Rather than deal with the causes in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, the learned monk demanded that the effect be dealt with and dealt with all the resources at the command of the State, that is, including violent means!

President Jayawardene, speaking at the same occasion, retorted: 'Terrorism could not be wiped out by killing terrorists. Terrorism was a world-wide phenomenon. It was difficult to prevent terrorism although it was easy to make proposals.'

Mr Jayawardene added: 'Even animals had to adapt to the environment or they would be destroyed. It was the same with people. If we have to live another 2,500 years, we cannot close our eyes to the present-day realities . . . There were about 2 million Tamils. Their history was a sad story. Thousands died. They were driven like animals. The Tamils in the North, East and Colombo had no place to live other than in Sri Lanka.'

Reminding the Prelate of his chosen priestly duties, the President called upon the Sangha and Buddhist organisations to have the Buddhist teachings printed in Sinhala, English and Tamil to be distributed all over the country.

Conversion

He added: 'There were 4 million non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Why could not these people be converted to Buddhism? Finances were not a problem.' He had spoken about it eight years ago, but nothing had been done about it, said the President.

One can only wish the President luck in his effort to convert the non-Buddhists. But he should not be so naive as to think that a knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha makes one a good Buddhist. Mr Cyril Matthew and Rev. Elle Gunawansa are two good examples.

EVOLUTION OF THE TAMIL QUESTION (Part II)

THE COLLAPSE OF PARLIAMENT

FROM PAGE 14

Sinhalese and Tamils could meet in anmity to agree or disagree.

It would not be out of place, at this juncture, to analyse the situation of the CWC and S. Thondaman. The presence of Thondaman in the Cabinet has no doubt enabled him to get certain benefits for the up-country Tamils, like franchise in local government elections, but these gains are very marginal, compared to what, as admitted by Thondaman himself, they could not achieve —

'In 1948, they robbed us of the citizenship and then afterwards, our representation in Parliament. As a result, a large number of persons are still stateless. President Jayawardene said in Delhi at the NAM summit he will resolve the matter.

'. . . He repeated this when the Indian Foreign Minister, Mr Narasinha Rao, came here. Then what happened? Extremist elements, racist groups who think they represent the Sinhalese people created a situation by which the President's good plans have been wrecked and thousands are fleeing to India.' ('Lanka Guardian', 1.11.83)

These reveal the general inability of the Tamils to make use of the existing institutional structures to work out an agreeable solution.

And that brings us to the question of youth militancy and violence in the Tamil areas.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From South Africa

HIGH QUALITY BY 'PART-TIMERS'

I wish to acknowledge receipt of all the 'Tamil Times' you posted. For a group of 'part-timers', I must say the 'Tamil Times' is of exceptionally high quality.

Although you are experiencing problems in obtaining first-hand reports from Sri Lanka itself, your reports on the situation there are very good. From this distance, it is not easy to make any criticism of your enterprise. The 'Tamil Times' in its present form is of a very high standard and I wish you all the best in the future.

Forefathers

The Indians in South Africa, who number about a million, are the biggest concentration of Indians outside India and Sri Lanka. The majority of Indians are Tamil-speaking whose forefathers were brought to South Africa by the British colonists to work the sugar plantations of Natal.

Although the Indian people have maintained their cultural and religious heritage, they regard themselves as South Africans. In spite of the discrimination at the hands of the white minority, a majority of the Indian working class and progressive forces align themselves with the African majority in the struggle for full political rights.

The Indians of South Indian background have made tremendous contributions for the cultural, educational and social upliftment of the Tamil and Telugu-speaking people. The two groups have their own federations that are responsible for the promotion of the language and of Hindu religion and culture. Unfortunately the younger generation seem to be losing their knowledge of the Tamil and Telugu languages because of so-called western civilisation.

Support assured

While we as Tamils will always support the struggle of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, we will also play our full part in the struggle in South Africa. Our financial, moral and diplomatic support you are assured of, but this needs to be developed here.

We hope you will not mind our using some of your articles in our own newspaper. By publishing the articles we are certain that we will be able to attract hundreds of subscribers for 'Tamil Times'.

Your faithfully,
M.S. Mani

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BBC REPORT ON JAFFNA

The following is the text of a report by Alex Brody, broadcast by BBC Radio 4 on February 25, 1984:

"Now to Sri Lanka where a guerrilla movement is gaining ground among the country's Tamil minority. In a recent report from Sri Lanka, Alex Brody examined the violent nationalism which led mobs of Buddhist Sinhalese, the majority community, to murder many hundreds of Hindu Tamils in riots last summer. In this report from Jaffna, the main city in the Tamil north of the country, he looks at the future of Tamil resistance.

The young woman beside me on the train as it pulled away from Jaffna in the Tamil north of Sri Lanka, towards the Sinhalese south, was clearly very nervous. It had taken her months to pluck up the courage to return to her studies at University in Colombo. She left, or rather fled, last July, before threats of violence from mobs seeking out Tamils to beat, rob or kill. She had reluctantly decided to go back to get her degree and risk the racial violence she knew could break surface again at any time.

In Jaffna more than 1,800 Tamil students have decided not to go back. They are calling for new facilities to be added to Jaffna University so that they can study in safety. After more than a week of this public fasting a bizarre kidnap took place. Several guerrillas armed with sub-machine guns drove up and took the hunger strikers away. That was in the middle of January, and nothing has been heard of them since, though word is said to have filtered back that they are safe and probably in India.

'The Boys' as the guerrillas are universally described in the North, it is felt, took the nine students away for their own good. This, to me, extraordinary tale excites little curiosity in Jaffna; merely a shrug of the shoulders, perhaps because as disappearances go it is nothing. Many hundreds, probably thousands, of youths aged between fifteen and twenty are said to have disappeared. Left the country, again it is said, for India, and for what is described as 'training'. Estimates of just how many vary. The most quoted figure is 4,000 to 5,000. My enquiries about this exodus are also greeted with what I now call 'the Jaffna shrug'. It seems to be used to denote the commonplace, which gullible outsiders like myself insist on finding remarkable.

I dwell on students, young guerrillas, disappearing youths, as youth is rather central to what is going on in Jaffna. Several respected and ageing members of the community made it quite clear that they looked to 'the Boys' to protect them should they be attacked again. Now some Sinhalese politicians insist that the cause of the trouble is terrorism by a few extreme and unrepresentative guerrillas. In the North they do not see it that way. They see the guerrillas, the militant youths who started operations ten years ago as a frustrated reaction to years of intolerance and persecution.

The guerrillas proclaim their desire for a separate state. The ordinary citizens of Jaffna don't want that; they just want security. But the clear sympathy of the community for 'the Boys' should give anyone contemplating counter-insurgency here, nightmares. Here on the northern peninsula where virtually everyone is a Tamil, joined to the rest of the country only by Elephant Pass — a narrow causeway — the people are already in something of a separate land. They cannot protect their people in the south from racial attacks, but there is bravado that the next attack in the north — the library in Jaffna was burnt in 1981, the army killed up to forty civilians in July, will be treated as an invasion and resisted.

The military in the north have severe powers in the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act'. But Sinhalese-speaking troops cannot communicate in even the most basic way with the Tamil-speaking citizenry.

The soldiers are jumpy, like strangers in a hostile foreign land, you might say. I asked a civilian officer where a convoy of two light tanks, an armoured personnel-carrier, three armoured cars and a truck-load of armed soldiers was going — 'to buy some cigarettes?' he suggested, and it was only half in jest. Soldiers do move about in great force and they do fan out and seal off the whole vicinity if a shop is to be visited for supplies. This amuses the locals and allows them to indulge in a favourite pastime, pouring scorn on the troops, the 'occupation forces' as some call them. But the soldiers are right to be wary. The guerrillas have picked several of them off in the past.

The atmosphere in Jaffna is tense. But while the politicians talk in Colombo, albeit sporadically, there is a breathing space, though each side accuses the other of using it to prepare for bloodshed."

TRINCO, WINE AND WOMEN

Pentagon officials say one of the major problems with the increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean region is giving the sailors a chance to get time off their ships.

There are decreasing number of liberty ports in the area, with India generally considered off-limits to US naval vessels. Islamic Pakistan is a difficult place for US sailors to have fun. That leaves Singapore and Kenyan port of Mombasa as the major drop-in spots.

After a 12-year ban by the Sri Lankan government, military ships from three nations have called there. The latest was a US destroyer, 'Gushing', whose visit demonstrated the expanded US naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

While the small, somnolent town of Trincomalee is not the ideal liberty port for sailors who want the traditional shore pleasures of cheap whisky and available women, the expanded Western and Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean makes it a real prize if for no other reason than to give the sea-weary crews a chance to get off their ships.

Sri Lanka would make a perfect call for US naval ships as the government of J.R. Jayawardene is generally pro-American. Many people here and in neighbnouring nations, especially India, fear that large numbers of foreign ships' visits will turn Colombo and Trincomalee into classic sailor rest-and-recreation ports, with rampant prostitution and other problems.

– *Stuart Auerbach in 'Washington Post'*

By kind courtesy 'Washington Post'

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FROM THE PRESS . . .

JULY '83 VIOLENCE AND TAMIL BRAIN DRAIN

In a special despatch to the 'Asian Wall Street Journal', BARRY WAIN writes from Colombo in its issue of February 8, 1984:

'Six months ago vicious racial rioting shook Sri Lanka. Mobs systematically sacked houses, shops and factories. They attacked, looted and killed.

Today, there is little visible reminder of the carnage. A few blackened buildings remain, but most are repaired or replaced. Streets are crowded. Stores do brisk business.

'The thing that strikes me,' says Minister of Trade and Shipping Lalith Athulathmudali, 'is how quickly it's gotten back to normal on the surface.'

But as his comment implies, there's more to the situation than meets the eye. Superficial signs of normalcy mask a country that is still deeply traumatised, tentative and troubled by its experience.

In fact, rebuilding burned-out structures is proving the easiest part of the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Restoring trust is another matter. Tens of thousands of Tamils, the Hindu minority victimised in the riots, have yet to resume their normal lives. Some aren't trying. They're grabbing any chance to flee abroad. Others are attracted to terrorist groups fighting for a separate Tamil nation.'

Here are other excerpts from Barry Wain's article:

'There's an all-or-nothing attitude now,' says a Western diplomat. Moderates feel that if they fail to resolve the problems decisively this time there will be further trouble that could even affect Sri Lanka's continued existence as a unitary state.'

In the climate of doubt and uncertainty, many Tamils want to leave. Authorities in India's Tamil Nadu state, west of Jaffna across the narrow Palk Strait, reported an immediate influx of 20,000 Tamils from Sri Lanka.

Lines of people formed at the Australian High Commission in Colombo when Canberra announced measures to assist emigrants. The Canadian, British and American missions also received more enquiries than usual.

Those with the qualifications to emigrate almost inevitably have scarce skills: doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers and senior civil servants among others. They're starting to quit their jobs as their applications to settle overseas are approved.

'This is going to have a long-term effect,' says a diplomat. 'They are losing talent they can't afford to lose.'

At the Central Bank of Ceylon, for example, three senior officers, all Tamils, have resigned as a direct result of the upheaval. It's the same story in private companies. And at least some Sinhalese are joining the exodus.

'I'm not going because I fear more Sinhalese violence against Tamils,' says a Tamil airline executive whose home was saved from an arson-minded mob by Sinhalese neighbours, 'I'm going because I'm afraid of any violence the government mightn't be able to stop.'

The extent of the accelerated brain drain isn't yet clear, since applications can take a couple of years to process . . .'

Rs.100 MILLION FOR MILITARISATION

'The Sun' (Sri Lanka) dated February 17, 1984, had a thrilling front-page splash under the following headline: Rs. 100 M TO SET UP NEW COMMANDO UNIT: POLICE LEARN SAS SKILLS. The report read: 'A highly specialised commando unit will be established in the Sri Lanka police force shortly as part of a government programme to strengthen the role of the law enforcement agency. Hand-picked personnel of the police are now being given training by a tream of Britain's elite Special Air Services.

The training programme began at the Police Training School at Katukurunda on Wednesday and the first batch, who will eventually receive positions in the north and the east, will form the nucleus of the new unit.

The new commando group will provide the necessary security for the stations and other installations in the northern and eastern provinces while at the same time ensuring that there would be improved public accessibility to police stations.

'Sun' learns that one hundred million rupees have been set aside from the Defence Ministry budget for this new security programme. Out of this sum 30 million rupees is to be spent on setting up a fully equipped commando training camp, in the suburbs of Colombo where the new Colombo group will be stationed once their training is concluded.

This group will also receive higher salaries in keeping with the training given to them and the risks they are expected to take in the course of carrying out their duties.

The new salary scales will be nearly double that of comparative ranks. Intelligence back-up services, vital for commando operations and provision of security for civil installations would also be upgraded, sources told 'Sun'.

Editor's note: The training that is now being provided is not by SAS men but by ex-SAS men who have now turned professional mercenaries.

DOUBTING DONORS

Accustomed to the extravagant ways of a UNP regime which has lived on the happy thought that the 'generosity' and the patience of donors are inexhaustible, aid-giving countries have started to express their scepticism about proposed aid-seeking projects. Recently, the Japanese Ambassador took a helicopter ride to Jaffna.

Besides acquainting himself with the general political scene (the mood of the people, the refugee situation, etc.) the Ambassador spent some time at the University campus, asking a great many questions, particularly about Tamil undergraduates displaced from southern campuses after July.

The inquiries, diplomats in Colombo remarked, had much to do with an official request for Japanese aid for the improvement and expansion of teaching facilities at the Jaffna campus.

Obviously, the Ambassador wanted to make sure himself what the actual needs were of the people in whose name aid was being sought.

LANKA GUARDIAN, 15.2.84

ADMISSION

In trying to justify the extension of the state of emergency for the eighth month, Minister Vincent Perera read out to Parliament a long list of armed robberies and violence crimes that, according to Police reports, had taken place in January 1984 alone.

What this official list of crimes reveals is that the 'growing lawlessness' is not something confined to the North and East and for which 'Eelam terrorists' are responsible, but has spread all over the country.

In fact, the list shows that violence and crime are far more frequent and common in the rest of the country than in the 'Tamil-speaking' North and East!

It is impossible to blame 'Eelam terrorists' for the large-scale violence and crime in the provinces other than the North and East. Nor is it possible to say that the inability of the Police to apprehend the criminals and stop such crime in these areas is due to the lack of 'informants', who are so terrified of reprisals that they prefer to keep silent.

IGP Rudra Rajasingham has announced enhanced rewards and greater secrecy and protection to 'informants'. Such measures are unlikely to have much impact. For the general breakdown of 'law and order', which has now become a matter of great public concern, is primarily a reflection of the breakdown of the social structure and values which the 'open economy' has caused.

FORWARD (Sri Lanka) 1.3.84

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RESTRICTION ON 'SATURDAY REVIEW' CHALLENGED

– Violation of rights claimed

The severe restrictions placed on the publication of the 'Saturday Review' is being challenged before the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. The Court has granted leave to proceed to the hearing of two applications filed under Article 126 of the Constitution.

The ban imposed on the publication of the 'Saturday Review', the only independent English language regional weekly newspaper in Sri Lanka on July 1st, 1983, was lifted recently and allowed resumption of publication under severe restrictions under Emergency Regulations. The paper has now reappeared with a new editor, Mr Gamini Navaratne, the veteran journalist who used to be a regular columnist for the paper before it was banned. The previous editor, Mr S. Sivanayagam, is presently in India.

The silencing of the 'Saturday Review' came at the most crucial time in Sri Lanka's history — a time during which unmitigated violence and murder were let loose upon the Tamil people by the security forces and Sinhala mobs on an island-wide basis and human and fundamental rights of the people were violated with impunity. The intention of the government in silencing the paper was to ensure that such violations were not exposed.

It is of special significance that among those who have filed the applications before the Supreme Court are several Sinhalese. The first application has been made by Messrs K. Visuvalingam, Oscar P.L. Pereira and T.U. Cooray. The second is by Mr. V. Kanapathippillai, Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya and Ms. Manel Fonseka.

Freedom of expression and speech

In both applications, it was contended that the closure of the 'Saturday Review' was a violation of the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and speech, including publication granted by Article 14 (1) of the Constitution. The petitioners have claimed, inter alia, for a declaration that the order for closure was null and void, and for damages.

Mr S. Nadesan QC, who appeared in support of the two applications, told the Supreme Court that the 'Saturday Review' had now been allowed to recommence publication, but under very stiff guidelines which did not apply to any other publication in Sri Lanka.

'This itself was discriminatory. The Secretary to the Minister of State, as Competent Authority, had not paid any consideration to the fact and circumstances relating to the "Saturday Review" but had merely copied the words of the Emergency Regulations mechanically without bringing his mind to bear upon the matter.'

No incitement

In both applications, it was maintained that in the 'Saturday Review' newspaper at no time has there been any publication of matter calculated to be prejudicial to (a) the interest of national security, or (b) the preservation of public order, or (c) the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community. Neither has there been any matter inciting persons to mutiny, riot or civil commotion and that therefore the Competent Authority could not have formed the opinion which he says he did

'The "Saturday Review" has from its inception been critical of some aspects of Government policy besides publishing news of the manner in which the security forces and the police behaved in exercising their powers.

'The "Saturday Review" is a paper which does not put forward the policies of any political party, and is a non-partisan newspaper dealing with matters of public interest in respect of all aspects social, political and cultural in Sri Lanka. Copies of this newspaper will be placed before the Court and relied upon by the petitioners . . .'

Mr Nadesan went on to read the 'Guidelines for Censorship' issued by the Competent Authority on 2nd August 1983, during the aftermath of the July 1983 violence, and which are now applicable only to the 'Saturday Review'.

This is the first time in the history of journalism in Sri Lanka that a journalist has filed a petition claiming redress under the fundamental rights provisions of the basic laws of the land.

In his affidavit filed along with application No.85 of 1983, the fifth petitioner stated: 'While the Competent Authority has imposed censorship (when necessary) on practically all other newspapers, he has completely debarred the publication of the "Saturday Review" thereby discriminating between the other newspapers and the "Saturday Review". Thereby the Competent Authority has infringed the fundamental rights enshrined in Article 12(1) and 12(2) of the Constitution.

'Deprived of information'

'By reason of the closure of the "Saturday Review", I have been deprived of learning valuable information and of dispassionate and non-partisan views and news which appear in the "Saturday Review", and which I cannot obtain from any other source or publication. I am also prevented from publishing my weekly column. Thereby I have suffered damage which I am entitled to recover . . .'

The two applications were taken up before Mr Justice D. Wimalaratne, Mr Justice Abdul Cader and Mr Justice Rodrigo.

Mr Justice Rodrigo dissented from the decision of the other two judges to grant leave to proceed with the applications. The hearing will be taken up in due course.

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4. However, appeals for assistance from the Governments or voluntary organisations will be permitted. No reference will be permitted to movement of displaced persons or modes of transportation.
5. No statements will be permitted on any subject by political parties or political personalities other than statements arranged for broadcast through state media.
6. No comment will be permitted by any person on the present security or political situation.
7. No direct reference will be permitted to any foreign country even by implication — as being responsible for the current situation.

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Ministry of State
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2nd August 1983

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GENIUS AND GREATNESS
WRAPPED IN SILKS

By GEORGE MASON Acting Editor, Ceylon 'Daily News'

President J.R. Jayawardene talks so often and so much about the freedom enjoyed by the Press in Sri Lanka. But he apparently does not know what is happening just under his nose, that is, at the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd (Lake House).

The acting Editor of the state-controlled 'Daily News', Mr George Mason, wrote a birthday tribute to Mr S. Nadesan QC, intended for publication in its issue of 11th February, 1984.

It appeared in the provincial edition of 'Daily News', but not in the other editions of the newspaper.

Why? Orders had come from above that it should be pulled out!

If Mr J.R. Jayawardene is genuine about his concern for the freedom of the Press, then he should order an inquiry into this shameful fact — and take action against the person concerned.

We publish here what the 'Daily News' failed to carry in the Colombo and other editions.

Life yields greatness to some, happiness to much fewer. Mr S. Nadesan, QC, who celebrated his 80th birthday on February 11th, can claim the satisfaction of a life successfully spent in a struggle to give consolation to others.

As one whose duties took me to his chambers almost daily, for nearly nineteen years, I naturally came to know him well. I have witnessed some part of his generosity.

Every Sunday, a company of ten or fifteen men — all in their sixties, all of whom have seen better days, perhaps, would gather at his Castle Street home. Mr S. Nadesan would ring for his all-purpose clerk Amujan. The latter followed his master's gaze, then left the room and came back with a stack of hundred or fifty-rupee notes. These duly delivered, the visitors would nod to their benefactor and leave.

I have seen young people who had passed their medical entrance or gained admission to some engineering course, crowd into his chambers. Each was soon drawing up a list of text-books he needed. I saw this not once but year after year. On one occasion, I recall a student tried to tell my senior that some cheaper or second-hand version was available. He was anxious to keep the bill as low as he could.

'I say,' replied Mr S. Nadesan in what to me always seemed a deliberately drawn-out style of speech, 'I say, young man, did I ask you to compile a list of second-hand books. Tell me what you want, all you need to see you through to the best you can do. I say, I'll find the money. You find the time and the energy to do your best.'

Orthodox Hindu

Mr. S Nadesan is a deeply orthodox Hindu. Yet St Peter's College, a Catholic institution which stood close by, found a ready benefactor in him.

'No, you see,' I heard him tell a client who looked aghast when the lawyer brought one and all of the ticket books some boys were selling prior to some concert or school show.

'No, you see; I say, those men there are doing a great human service. I hear that Fr. Panditharatne, or some priest there, has a Ph.D. in Physics from London. He has sacrificed everything in the cause of humanity as a Christian. Surely, we owe it to them ourselves, I say, to help causes like that?'

I will never forget one of the first and finest lessons I've learned at Mr S. Nadesan's hands. Having assigned some work to me, he got ready to leave for Hulftsdorp. At the door he paused. 'I say, George, not only your splendid phrases — I want my points too, right?'

Of himself, the Queen's Counsel would say, 'I am a lawyer, professor, a physician by vocation and choice.'

The distinction, perhaps, revealed his deeper instincts: his humanness mainly.

Once, when Ernest Corea, then Editor of the 'Daily News', told him of a special diet he was advised to follow, Mr S. Nadesan cut in: 'I say, Ernest, tell your doctor to return my book when he's finished with it, will you?'

'Mason, why ever do you smoke like this?' he would say, urging that he was

conducting a one-man campaign against smoking. His patients included Father Justin Perera and veterans like Proctor A.C. de Alwis, Seneviratne.

As a lawyer, he will always rank with the sharpest minds the Bar of this country has ever known.

I've heard one of our most eminent judges address him thus: 'Mr Nadesan, I'd like to hear more of your own views on this matter. I find you more illuminating than some of the authorities you cite.'

Never rile the Bench, he would advise. Always remember your first duty is by your client. Never let yourself be carried away by some idle remark from anyone, however unworthy.

There was one celebrated case in which Mr S. Nadesan's adversary addressed court for almost a fortnight. Mr S. Nadesan's reply took less than an hour. He won.

Mr Nadesan was not without a sense of humour. His arch adversary, in many famous cases, the late Mr C. Thiagalingam, QC, once protested to Court at the beginning of a case one morning.

'I don't know, your Honour, what my learned friend has to smile so much about, He is wearing a broad grin, if I may use the word.'

Laughter in Court

'Ah,' rose Mr Nadesan to explain, now visibly shaking good humouredly. 'Ah, your Honour, I thank God for a happy disposition. After all, Sir, we are not here waging war on each other. Sir, we are trying to seek your judgement on a legal matter in a very civil and peaceful manner. After all, Sir, I see many things to make me happy, this fine morning. The sky is blue, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, the flowers are blooming — and good cheer is infectious. There you are, I see your Honour smiling, too. Let us live and die smiling. For myself, Sir, I have many reasons for smiling and not the least of them is that it seems to annoy my learned friend.'

There was a roar of laughter throughout the court. Even Mr C. Thiagalingam could scare forbear a cheer.

Mr Esmond Wickrwemasinghe, one of the most astute minds of his generation, had implicit faith in Mr Nadesan as a lawyer. His tactics, his court-craft-all

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suited the limitless situations that arose in journalism.

Tireless worker

Mr S. Nadesan is a tireless worker. His own capacity speaks for his health programme. Often at three in the morning when I was plainly under strain, he would say, 'George, you're tired. Get home and rest. I'll sit up for another hour or two. Don't be worried. Sometimes for all this study I go in and play it by ear.'

To a fanatic who was mounting a fierce anti-Catholic campaign in the sixties, Mr Nadesan said: 'I say, I hold nothing particularly against them. These people think they alone know the way to heaven. They may be wrong. But I admire their generous instinct. 'We know the way and we are determined to take you along with us. One cannot complain that they are shutting the gates on us or refusing to share what they consider their good fortune.'

Mr S. Nadesan has written several brilliant monographs, on the Consitution and on Human Rights, among other subjects. He has contributed the most stimulating studies to the Press. In the Senate, his speeches were clear, fearless and learned.

He was — and is — always ready to fight the cause of the underdog. His clients have been legion. His Sinhala friends are without number.

I once had occasion to look for some authority in his library. 'I say, Mason,' he interrupted, 'surely you know, I'm not exactly an academic or one who relies overmuch on learned tomes, I try to think out a solution and then test it with precedents and commentaries I can lay hold of.'

Clear mind

This was a technique that the late Mr H.V. Perera, QC, once said he himself used to adopt.

Mr Nadesan has never betrayed any hint of conceit or malice. A man with a deep philosophic turn of mind, he is steeped in religous literature, in historical works and political writings.

It is a well-deserved tribute to the man that he held an esteemed place in the Senate almost throughout the entire period that we in this country claimed a Second Chamber, a tribute to him and a tribute and pride to the people of this land, no less.

At eighty, Mr Nadesan enjoys a fine, clear and astute mind. He blends in himself a fine balance of a rare mental talent and a large and generous heart.

He has added lustre to our legal history, lustre to our history of a people. I have known him to help many: never to hurt anyone by so much as an unkind word.

PRETORIA TAMILS TAKE ON CULTURAL REVIVAL

The Pretoria Tamil League has drawn up programmes aimed at teaching the Tamil youth to read, write and speak their mother tongue — Tamil.

This was contained in the resolution passed by the Tamil League at its biennial General meeting held recently at its new Tamil Cultural Centre in Laudium.

Other programmes to be excuted include teaching, aspects of religious studies, traditional and modern Indian fashion, pottery-making and special literacy classes for Tamil adults. It was also agreed that these courses would be short but comprehensive and last a maximum of eight weeks at a session.

Ambitious plans

Pretoria Tamil League raised more than Rs.300,000 over the past two years towards its ambitious plans to revive and encourage Tamil cultural activities. The money was raised by door to door collection. This was significant as it proved beyhond any doubt that Laudium Tamils are alive to their language and religion and are determined to put into operation some major projects for the furtherance of our Tamil culture.

The following officials were elected to hold office for the proceeding two years: President: Mr Sathia Pillay; Vice Presidents: Dr Perry Padayatchi, Mr Chetty; Treasurer: Dr Ganas Naidoo; Secretary: Mr Kisten Naidoo; Asst. Secretary: Mr Sundra Pillay; Stanhigars: Mr G. Krishnan, Mr V.V. Naidoo; Life Vice Presidents: Messrs C. Amblavanan, V.N. Naidoo, V.V. Naidoo, B.T. Pillay, P. Siva Chetty and G. Krishnan.

Rewarding tour

Meanwhile, the newly elected President of the Pretoria Tamil League has recently returned from a rewarding tour of the USA. Sathia Pillay spent three months in the USA on a Rotary scholarship, studying aspects of teaching deaf children.

While on his travels, Mr Pillay met many people of South Indian descent who had made the USA their home. It is interesting to note that there are huge South Indian temples in America. One of these is in Pittsburg. The Tamil community of Canada is presently building a massive temple in Toronto.

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BOOK REVIEW

'EUROPE AND THE DRAVIDIANS' by Paulinus Tambimuttu. Reviewed by K. Gnanasoorian, MSc., Director of the Institute for International Tamil Renaissance, 72 King Edward Road, London E17.

'Petra thayum, pirantha ponnaddum
Natrava vaaninum nani siranthanave'

Whenever Tamil feeling grows stronger, the full impact of the above words rings clearer and louder and then with a renewed sense of urgency. Those among us who have been privileged to delve deep into some aspects of Tamil culture begin to feel an inner urge to leave something tangible and of value to their community as a debt of gratitude to the glory of our Tamil heritage.

One such effort is Mr Paulinus Tambimuttu's excellent book entitled 'Europe and the Dravidians' which is as wide in its scope of treatment as in its depth of scholarship and research, well attested by 232 references to original source material in the fields of Dravidian linguistics and indology.

The book has a special relevance to those of us in the West, not only because of its title but because it throws a lot of light on the hitherto little known areas of Dravido-Sumerian affinities. Similarities between Basque and some other European languages on the one hand and those of the Dravido-Sumerian group on the other, are also unmistakable.

A subject of absorbing interest to all of us is the deciphering of the Indus Script and it is fitting that the book has devoted a chapter to this aspect, drawing its conclusions from the contributions of A. Parpola and his colleagues at the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies with the concurrence of Russian scholars who have accepted that the language of the Indus Valley was Dravidian.

Painstaking

The author's painstaking efforts seem amply rewarded in his attempts to adduce evidence to prove that the first neolithic farmers who came to Europe were of the same stock and spoke a similar language as the Dravidian-speaking peoples of India and Ceylon.

We congratulate Mr Tambimuttu and express our gratitude for his great contribution to Dravidological research from the European angle. Priced at £2.50, this book is available from the author at 44 Rowfant Road, London SW17.

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CONVENTION IN CANADA

The Tamils of California will be hosting a Convention in Los Angeles on Saturday, April 21, 1984. A large gathering from all over the United States and Canada is expected.

Prominent speakers will deal with the various issues concerning the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka. Representatives of many Tamil organisations will be attending the meeting.

This will be an ideal opportunity to get to know one another and work towards a common goal.

Those interested should contact CHELVA, P.O. Box 90276, Pasadena, CA 91109-0276 (Tel: 213-793-5335)

SACEM OF CANADA

The Society for the Aid of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Minorities, with its address at 1943 Lawrence Avenue West, Weston, Ontario M9N 1G8 was recently set up with the declared purpose of serving the Tamil minority community in the Toronto area. This organisation came into being in September 1983 following the violent July events in Sri Lanka.

SACEM periodically published its own Newsletter under the title, TAMILS-THAMILAR.

The office-bearers of SACEM are as follows:

Honorary Vice-Presidents: Miss E. Amaron C.M., Mr. A. Dharmalingham, Mrs. J. Hanna, Dr. L. Leone C.M., Mrs. H. Peterson, Rev. B. Sinclair, Mrs. Barbra Sullivan, Prof. H. Adelman.

Executive: Dr. K. Ratnanather — President; Mrs. R. Rajanaygam — V. President; Mr. R. Udayasekeran — V. President; Mr. H. Sheriff — General Secretary; Mr. S. Kathirgamathamby — Asst. General Secretary; Mr. S. Vijayasingham — Treasurer; Mrs. N. Ratnanather — Volunteer Secretary; Mr. M. Thurairajah — Press Secretary

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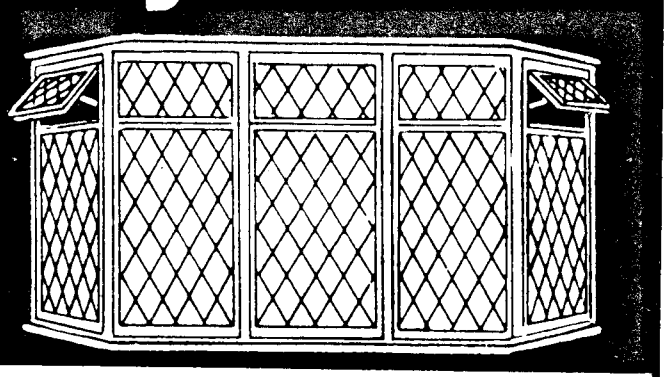

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